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(2) If the Secretary finds that a pattern of violations exists or has existed, the permit and right to mine under this Act shall be either suspended or revoked and the permittee directed to complete necessary corrective measures and reclamation operations.

(e) Whenever a permittee fails to abate a violation contained in a notice of violation or cessation order within the abatement period set in the notice or order or as subsequently extended, the Director shall review the permittee's history of violations to determine whether a pattern of violations exists pursuant to this section, and shall issue an order to show cause as appropriate pursuant to 30 CFR 723.15(b)(2).

[42 FR 62701, Dec. 13, 1977 and 46 FR 58783, Sept. 4, 1980]

§ 722.17 Inability to comply.

(a) Neither a notice of violation nor a cessation order issued under this part may be vacated because of inability to comply.

(b) A permittee may not be deemed to have shown good cause for not suspending or revoking a permit by showing inability to comply.

(c) Unless caused by lack of diligence, inability to comply may be considered in mitigation of the amount of a civil penalty under part 723 of this chapter and of the duration of the suspension of the permit under § 722.16 of this part.

PART 723—CIVIL PENALTIES

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30 CFR Ch. VII (7–1–04 Edition)

AUTHORITY: 28 U.S.C. 2461, 30 U.S.C. 1201 *et seq.*, Pub. L. 100-34, Pub. L. 101-410, and Pub. L. 104-134.

SOURCE: 45 FR 58783, Sept. 4, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

§ 723.1 Scope.

This part covers the assessment of civil penalties under section 518 of the Act for violations of a permit condition, any provision of Title V of the Act, or any implementing regulations, except for the assessment of individual civil penalties under section 518(f), which is covered by part 724. This part governs when a civil penalty is assessed and how the amount is determined, and sets forth applicable procedures. This part applies to cessation orders and notices of violation issued under part 722 of this chapter during a Federal inspection.

[53 FR 3674, Feb. 8, 1988]

§ 723.2 Objective.

Civil penalties are assessed under section 518 of the Act and this part to deter violations and to ensure maximum compliance with the terms and purpose of the Act on the part of the coal mining industry.

§ 723.11 How assessments are made.

The Office shall review each notice of violation and cessation order in accordance with the assessment procedures described in §§ 723.12, 723.13, 723.14, 723.15, and 723.16 to determine whether a civil penalty will be assessed, the amount of the penalty, and whether each day of a continuing violation will be deemed a separate violation for purposes of the total penalty assessed.

§ 723.12 When penalty will be assessed.

(a) The Office shall assess a penalty for each cessation order.

(b) The Office shall assess a penalty for each notice of violation, if the violation is assigned 31 points or more under the point system described in § 723.13.

(c) The Office may assess a penalty for each notice of violation assigned 30 points or less under the point system described in § 723.13. In determining whether to assess a penalty, the Office

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shall consider the factors listed in § 723.13(b).

§ 723.13 Point system for penalties.

(a) The Office shall use the point system described in this section to determine the amount of the penalty and, in the case of notices of violation, whether a mandatory penalty should be assessed as provided in § 723.12(b).

(b) Points shall be assigned as follows:

(1) *History of previous violations.* The Office shall assign up to 30 points based on the history of previous violations. One point shall be assigned for each past violation contained in a notice of violations. Five points shall be assigned for each violation (but not a condition or practice) contained in a cessation order. The history of previous violations for the purpose of assigning points, shall be determined and the points assigned with respect to a particular surface coal mining operation. Points shall be assigned as follows:

(i) A violation shall not be counted if the notice or order is the subject of pending administrative or judicial review or if the time to request such review or to appeal any administrative or judicial decision has not expired, and thereafter it shall be counted for only one year.

(ii) No violation for which the notice or order has been vacated shall be counted; and

(iii) Each violation shall be counted without regard to whether it led to a civil penalty assessment.

(2) *Seriousness.* The Office shall assign up to 30 points based on the seriousness of the violation, as follows:

(i) *Probability of occurrence.* The Office shall assign up to 15 points based on the probability of the occurrence of the event which a violated standard is designed to prevent. Points shall be assessed according to the following schedule:

PROBABILITY OF OCCURRENCE	
	Points
None	0
Insignificant	1-4
Unlikely	5-9
Likely	10-14
Occurred	15

(ii) *Extent of potential or actual damage.* The Office shall assign up to 15 points, based on the extent of the potential or actual damage, in terms of area and impact on the public or environment, as follows:

(A) If the damage or impact which the violated standard is designed to prevent would remain within the permit area, the Office shall assign zero to seven points, depending on the duration and extent of the damage or impact.

(B) If the damage or impact which the violated standard is designed to prevent would extend outside the permit area, the Office shall assign eight to fifteen points, depending on the duration and extent of the damage or impact.

(iii) *Alternative.* In the case of a violation of an administrative requirement, such as a requirement to keep records, the Office shall, in lieu of paragraphs (i) and (ii), assign up to 15 points for seriousness, based upon the extent to which enforcement is obstructed by the violation.

(3) *Negligence.* (i) The Office shall assign up to 25 points based on the degree of fault of the person to whom the notice or order was issued in causing or failing to correct the violation, condition, or practice which led to the notice or order, either through act or omission. Points shall be assessed as follows:

(A) A violation which occurs through no negligence shall be assigned no penalty points for negligence;

(B) A violation which is caused by negligence shall be assigned 12 points or less, depending on the degree of negligence;

(C) A violation which occurs through a greater degree of fault than negligence shall be assigned 13 to 25 points, depending on the degree of fault.

(ii) In determining the degree of negligence involved in a violation and the number of points to be assigned, the following definitions apply:

(A) *No negligence* means an inadvertent violation which was unavoidable by the exercise of reasonable care.

(B) *Negligence* means the failure of a permittee to prevent the occurrence of any violation of his or her permit or